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A
LETTER

FROM AN

Absented Member

TO HIS

Friend at WESTMINSTER.

1739

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FROM AN

APPOINTED MEMBER

TO HIS

FRIEND AT WESTMINSTER

—DEED—

A 26
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From an

Absented Member

TO A

Friend at WESTMINSTER,

Shewing his REASONS for retiring
into the Country upon the present
Situation of the Affairs of **GREAT**
BRITAIN.



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From the
Appointed Member

TO

Friend of Westminster

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A
L E T T E R

From an

Absented Member, &c.

S I R,

MY sudden Departure from
London, and unexpected Ab-
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my Duty to my Country,
and the Votes of my Electors had cal-
led me, and my unquestioned Zeal for
the Happiness and Welfare of a Trading
People made me appear, for several
Years

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Years, with some Distinction ; this sudden Departure, I say, might reasonably surprize the whole Kingdom, and give my Friends and Countrymen an Opportunity to condemn me as rash and inconsiderate. But I assure you, Sir, this is a Resolution, not taken by myself, but with the most deliberate Advice and Concurrence of a great Number of Gentlemen of undoubted Fortune and Character, who resolv'd to absent, as well as myself. And you may be thoroughly satisfy'd, that I would not have retired into, or rather forsook my Country, unless induced to it by the strongest Reasons.

I agree with you, Sir, that my Absence from the Great Council of the Realm, especially at a critical Juncture, when my Attendance seemed so absolutely requisite, and the Eyes of the whole Nation were fixed on us, expecting something would be done this Session, for the effectual Redress of our
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long and too often repeated Grievances, and for procuring a Satisfaction adequate to the cruel Insults and gross Affronts offered for these many Years to the *English* Flag, by the *Spaniards*: for these seeming Reasons, I say, that my Absence appears contrary to the fundamental Rules of Parliament, which command each Member's Attendance from the Beginning of the Session, till it is adjourned or prorogued, unless he be excused from it on some just Reasons, which I apprehend to be the present Case.

FROM the first time I have entertained the Thought of serving my Country in Parliament, I have also endeavoured to qualify myself for so honourable an Employment, and so great a Trust. It has been my principal Study to consult our Annals and best Historians, from whence I have learn'd, that our Ancestors never met in Parliament for
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mere Form's sake, to consult their own private Interests, or blindly to follow the Dictates of an over-bearing Minister, or an insolent Favourite. Nor could I ever find it consistent with the Character of a *British* Representative, to be corrupted with Money, or to vote on the strongest Side, right or wrong. I always concluded, that it was the Duty of a Member of Parliament to preserve the Subjects in the full Enjoyment of their Privileges and Liberties, and to oppose with Firmness and Resolution all those who should have the Presumption to invade them. I have often read with Pleasure, that our glorious Ancestors have been scrupulous Observers of those Rules, which the honest Representatives of a free People will always judge indispensable; and could not help commending their Zeal for their Country, and wishing myself in their Place, when I have heard that a vast Number of them, in different Ages, have preferred
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being made a Sacrifice to Liberty, than to have the cruel Mortification, to see it buried under Oppression. Those Walls, built for a Sanctuary to our Nation's Freedom, within whose Precincts we have so often met together, have of late made so many fruitless Attempts in Defence of our native Rights, and have so often been disappointed of our wish'd-for Expectations, are now the only Support for a Majority. Those noble and generous Principles of Liberty which are cemented with our Blood, are now become the Laughing-Stock of an over-bearing Man, whose Cause is supported by Numbers. Those lofty Roofs, so venerable for their Antiquity, and which have echo'd with the eloquent Speeches of BRITISH CATO's, I now abandon, because I can no longer be of any Service to my Country.

Alas! Sir, how are *Briton's* degenerated from their worthy Ancestors!

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those brave Champions of Liberty, who through a hearty Zeal to their Country, were ever ready to sacrifice their Lives and Fortunes in Defence of so glorious a Cause! Though descended from the same Blood, can we flatter ourselves with being animated by the same noble Spirit?

But what can be expected, Sir, when young, unthinking Boys are made Senators? who, for the sake of Money to gratify their youthful Passions, would not only sacrifice their Country, but even their Parents and themselves. But these Creatures have Votes, and the Majority is sufficient, right or wrong, to do what their Director orders them. Can it be expected, Sir, that such Men have any regard to the Preservation of the Liberties and Honour of their Country?

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THE most noble Resolutions, which were form'd for the Good of my Country, and supported by the strongest Reasons and Proofs, have prov'd abortive. I have attended the House long enough to be convinc'd, my Presence is of no Signification. If I had the Voice of an Angel, and the Wisdom of a *Solomon*, Votes would make the former, the Croaking of a Raven; and the latter, the Sentiments of an Ideot. Such is the present State of Affairs.

For alas! the Love of our domestick Peace and Tranquility, which we have long prefer'd to our publick Good, has render'd us a-despicable People. We have left the Commonwealth a-floating, and neglected its Safety, when threaten'd with the most violent Tempest. But this I speak in general, and with regard to the Majority; for I won't be so unjust to pretend, that the common Cause has been entirely and universally deserted;

I know that there are still a small Number of honest Men, who are ready to do their utmost, and who have bravely exerted themselves in the Defence of the Liberties of their Country ; but *quid hoc inter tantos*. Their most pathetick and eloquent Discourses have been heard with the greatest Impatience by the Majority ; and though much admired and approved of by some, yet have proved ineffectual.

It seems to be a very great Happiness, that we have been suffered to speak our Thoughts freely in the House of C——s, at a time when almost all our other Privileges have been ravished from us. It seems a Happiness, I say, that our Words, spoken in a Place where they ought never to be controlled, have not yet been under the Inspection of an Excise. But how long we are to enjoy that last Shadow of our Liberty, must be left to the Option of those who for
many

many Years past have been hammering out our Chains; for which I have always had so natural an Abhorrence, that to avoid the Sight of those Workmen employed in so despicable a Trade, I have at last resolv'd to leave a Place, where nothing but ill-concerted Schemes, to say no worse, are going forwards, And from the time I left the House, in a most solemn and publick manner, I think myself no ways liable for any Steps which shall be taken by a Majority, against the general Voice of the Nation.

You will not blame me for thus absenting myself, when you consider, Sir, that my Opposition has been insignificant, and my Presence look'd upon as a tacit Consent to whatever was done in that House where I am a Representative for supporting and defending the just Rights and Liberties of my Countrymen, and for redressing all Injuries which

which should be offer'd my Fellow-Subjects, either through the Weakness or Design of some People at home, or the Cruelty and Insolence of any Foreign Power whatever.

You are pleas'd to object, Sir, that my Absence, as well as of those who have taken the same Step, will leave a full Career to our Enemies, and encourage them to put in Execution, any Schemes they shall think proper to palm upon us, which the Fear of meeting with a strong Opposition might prevent being pursued with that Eagerness which might be expected from such rash Steersmen. But what can they do more than they have already done? Have we not lost our Credit both at Home and Abroad? Are we not left destitute of Allies, and become the Fable of our Enemies? Are not our Merchants, the Bulwark of a trading Nation, despis'd, and made a Jest of? Have they not sacrificed

sacrificed our Honour to their criminal Ambition, and to the scandalous Pleasure of enjoying Peace at any rate? Is not our Commerce, the strongest Support of the State, through Cowardice, or some other Considerations, which might be easily guessed at, rendered every Day more and more precarious? What have we then left? you'll say our Estates and our Families. But the one is already so heavily taxed, that it is with the utmost Difficulty that a Gentleman of a middling Estate can provide for the Maintenance of the other; and it cannot possibly be imagin'd, they should attempt to deprive us entirely of our Subsistence, and send our Children into Slavery. They may indeed ask for more Money, and employ it to the same Uses and needless Expences they have done heretofore. They may send our Admirals to take the Air in the *Mediterranean*; or to die in the *West-Indies*;

Indies ; or perhaps to procure us some Treaties, after five or six Years Negotiation, at the Conclusion of which, if it ever be concluded, we shall be as wise as we are at present, and receive as ample Satisfaction from *Don La Quadra*, as our wise and skilful Commissaries have been able to obtain from the late *Don Patinho*.

But no, says you, our M——'s Mind is quite alter'd since your Absence ; and to his heretofore pacifick Inclination has succeeded a most warlike one : he is at last resolv'd to take the Field, and to gain by Force of Arms, what he has lost by his Negotiations, that is, our Honour and our Reputation.

But we can consent to no Measures, while he is at the Head of our Affairs, lest under his Direction our Arms should meet with as ill Success, as our Treaties have done. Let him first be deprived
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of an Employment he is unworthy of ; let him be taken from the Head of our Affairs, which he has so unskilfully managed ; let him retire to his sumptuous Palaces built with the Publick Money, since his Aspect is as unfavourable to us, as his Politicks have proved detrimental ; and then we will return and take our Places in Parliament, and do our utmost to take such Measures as shall be for the Honour of our Prince, and the Welfare of his Subjects.

How can our insolent M——r pretend to go to war, when the vast Sums which would have served to maintain it, and pursue it with Success, have been lavished in needless Armaments, and fine Raree-shows ? and who would venture to be accountable, that any Sum of Money, which should be hereafter rais'd for carrying on a vigorous War, would not again be employ'd the same Way as before ?

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But how can he pretend to go to war, when he himself has assured us, that we have no Foreign Alliances on which we may depend? and how can he expect to make new ones, when he has so shamefully deserted our natural Allies, in time of Need? Which of them would trust such a treacherous Man, who from time to time has forfeited his Word to them all? Believe me, Sir, to make our Affairs take a better Turn, we must intrust them to some other Hands, and have a M——r, who has not lost his Reputation, nor has a Brother employ'd, to lose the Publick Faith. Till then, we cannot flatter ourselves with the least Hope of any Success in our Enterprizes, neither can the Nation, till then, expect to see a free P——t. I speak this, without any personal Prejudice; it is an undeniable Truth; and our political M——r plumes himself with the Authority he has over the Majority.

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Besides you are mistaken Sir, if you think our M——r's Mind changed; methinks you should know him better; and his late Miscarriages and Blunders might convince you, that he is not capable of forming a Project the least advantageous to the *British* Nation. If he seems otherwise disposed, than he was when he attempted, at our first Meeting together in this Session, and has so well succeeded, in blinding the Majority of us, with his advantageous C——n, it proceeds only from Fear; for this overbearing Gentlemans Mind is not changed, I can assure you; he has been indeed somewhat chagreen'd, because he could not have imagin'd there would have been so great a Desertion from the House; and he has been under great Apprehensions, that it might be attended with fatal Consequences. For it is very natural he may propose to himself the following Questions: *What will their Electors imagine, when they see those Members re-*

turn, as soon almost as they were departed. Must they not conclude, and that with very great Reason, that there is something going forward in P——t, no ways to the Honour and Interest of the Nation. And as I am too sensible, that the Generality of the People have already conceiv'd a very bad Opinion of my Ad——tion, and lay all their Misfortunes to my Charge, to what Dangers may I not be expos'd, as being the suppos'd Cause of such a Number of Members absenting themselves from their Duty to their Country in P——t? They will say, That on all Occasions, I have had regard to nothing but my own Security; and that the Nation might be ruin'd, for what I minded, provided my own self, could be secure, and I might sleep in a whole Skin? I am thoroughly convinc'd, That while both Parties are contending in the House, the Publick is not so intent on their Proceedings; and their Debates serve only for Amusement, for Table Talk; or for Matter of Conversation at Coffee-houses

houses and Taverns ; But when the Nation sees those Members remarkable for asserting the Rights and Privileges of their Fellow-Subjects, and whom nothing could ever bribe, or corrupt, give up the Cause, as if it was impossible any longer to defend it ; what other Inferences can be made from such a Behaviour, than that the Nation is upon the Brink of Ruin, and that it can't be saved any other Way, than by some desperate Resolution ?

These are his Reflections, and perhaps the most judicious ones he ever made, they have embarrass'd and perplex'd our wise M—r, too conscious of his Inabilities for the great Task he has for so many Years undertaken ; and this surprizing C—n, added to his other Conduct, and the certainty of his carrying any Cause he thinks proper by a Majority, has at last forced us to retire from Business, and neglect our Attendance at a Place where our Presence seems so absolutely

lutely necessary, for the Welfare of our Country.

But this wonderful Politician would now fain cajole us with the vain Hope of his Repentance, to avoid, say his Advocates, the Miseries of a civil War, which some ill-designing Men might endeavour to kindle, and which might be prevented by our speedy Return. False Reasoning indeed! as if a whole Tree should be destroy'd, because overburdened with a dead Branch, which can easily be remov'd, without the least Prejudice to the rest. Must we take the bloody Resolution of cutting one another's Throats, because the Commonwealth is plagued with a corrupted Member, which might so easily be remedied without a national Confusion? What bad Opinion must those Wretches have formed of our Duty to our Sovereign, from whose Royal Word we have all the Reason in the World to expect

expect that our just Complaints shall be redress'd; and that he will, when he shall see proper, remove from his Sacred Person, a Man who has been so long offensive to us; since we have nothing more at Heart than his Honour, and the Welfare of our Countrymen.

In our voluntary Exile, we preserve within us the most just and sincere Allegiance to his Majesty; and so far from sounding the Trumpet of Rebellion, were any of his Subjects, which can with no Reason be suppos'd, attempt to disturb his happy Reign, we should be the first to appear in his Defence: for is it not sufficiently well known, that his Majesty is entirely free from all Passion, and deliberately considers the Welfare and Ease of his Subjects, well knowing from all the Histories of past Ages, that the Happiness and Safety of an *English* King depends on the Affections of his Subjects. But it is too well known,

known, from the unhappy Fates of King *Charles* the First, and his Son King *James* the Second, to what unhappy Dilemma's evil Ministers may reduce their Sovereigns. Princes are not infallible; and the multiplicity of their Affairs oblige them to hear with others Ears and see with others Eyes, and acquiesce with false Reports. It is no wonder then, that Things are often represented to a Prince in a Light quite different to what they really are; and always to the Advantage of the Person in Trust, who has ever a Number of Adherents and Dependents, always ready to applaud the Measures of their Patron and Supporter, let them ever be so ill concerted; well knowing, that upon his Support is their Security. He may indeed by Accident hear the Complaints of his People, but those Complaints are represented only as the Effect of popular Prejudices, or the ambitious Jealousy of some uneasy People, who would be glad to supplant the
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Favourite in his Royal Master's Confidence. Hence it proceeds, that those Complaints are seldom heard ; or if they are, but very little regarded, if not entirely rejected.

For the foregoing Reasons, and no other, Sir, we have absented ourselves from the Service of the House ; and not without some Hopes of Success. We are persuaded, that by this time the News of our Departure has reach'd the Throne ; and we don't doubt but his Majesty will enquire into the Reasons thereof ; and not suffer in our Absence, any Projects should be executed, or Resolutions taken, contrary to the true Interests of his People.

Into his Paternal Hands we therefore trust our Liberties, Lives and Fortunes ; and shall always think them safe under the Protection of a Prince, who enjoys his Crown through a Revolution form'd

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upon

upon the Principles of Liberty, and
upon the Abdication of a Prince whose
fiery Zeal and absolute Temper, lost
him three Kingdoms, and the Affections
of the most generous People in the
World.



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Your most Obedient,

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